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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 002647

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CY](#) [GR](#) [CYPRUS](#)

SUBJECT: THE WAY AHEAD ON CYPRUS: THE VIEW FROM ATHENS

REF: A. NICOSIA 1617

[1](#)B. ANKARA 6036

Classified By: AMB. CHARLES P. RIES FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Embassy Athens welcomes an exchange with the Department, Nicosia, and Ankara on the way ahead on the Cyprus issue. From our perspective, the October 3 accession wrangle provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at the Cyprus problem, and underscore the importance of grasping this nettle again. While we believe Athens can play a constructive role, simply asking Greece to put pressure on Papadopoulos is not likely to take us very far. We would expect a repetition of the stock answer of how difficult politically it is to intervene. To break the logjam on re-starting negotiations and to change the atmosphere, we recommend exploring whether the UNSYG would appoint a "group of wisemen," chaired by an internationally respected figure of moral stature and comprised of prominent Greeks, Turks and Greek/Turkish Cypriots. To be successful, such a group would have to have a focused mandate -- excluding (if possible) contentious zero-sum game debates and placing the emphasis on a possible positive future of Greek and Turkish Cypriots living together in a bizonal, bicomunal federal state. Some additional ideas are presented in para 8. END SUMMARY.

Cyprus Issue: The Greek Context

[1](#)2. (C) Embassy Athens endorses Nicosia's observation that there is a window of opportunity, and a new reason for taking a fresh look at the Cyprus issue following the October 3 EU decision on Turkey. In our view, Greece, which played a generally positive role on Turkey's EU track, can be engaged to play a positive role in contributing to a Cyprus settlement. Aside from the undoubted stability that a united Cyprus would bring to the region, Greece has other compelling reasons to want to see Cyprus solved: big savings on the troops and equipment it provides to Cyprus to balance Turkish forces and savings in contributions it makes to UNFICYP (Greece pays 6.5 million USD annually).

[1](#)3. (C) But getting the Greeks to pressure Papadopoulos to take a more conciliatory approach to an Annan Plan-type Cyprus settlement is at best a small part of the answer. Any Greek government -- especially the current one headed by ultra-cautious PM Karamanlis -- fears creating the impression with its voters that it does not support its Hellenic "little brother" far more than it fears Turkish troops on northern Cyprus. In fact, during this past summer of de Villepin's discontent with Turkey's EU prospects, the Greek Government came under fierce criticism at home for being seen as less vigorous in support of Cypriot "rights" than France (or Austria). FM Molyviatis has told us repeatedly that Papadopoulos, who is not personally popular with Greek Government officials, has more leverage on Greece than the other way around, since he can play the pan-Hellenic card whenever GoG actions are not to his liking. For his part, Karamanlis has kept Papadopoulos at arm's length (and Molyviatis does everything he can to avoid FM Iacovou), and keeps relations with Cyprus and those with Ankara on two separate tracks, whenever possible. In short, he believes (and we agree) that relations with Ankara are too important to be held hostage to the obstructionist Papadopoulos and the day-to-day vagaries of the Cyprus issue.

[1](#)4. (C) That said, there are good reasons to believe that Greece could be brought to engage positively now on Cyprus. First, it is in Athens' interest to keep the Cyprus issue out of the EU and under the UN umbrella. After the rough-and-tumble of fashioning EU positions on the counterstatement and negotiating framework, we should be able to reinforce to the Greeks -- and more to the point, get the Greeks to reiterate -- that it is logical and natural to reinvigorate the UN process on Cyprus. The fight about Turkey clearly demonstrated (to everyone except President Papadopoulos) that the EU is not the place to pursue a comprehensive settlement, and that a settlement is needed now more than ever. More importantly, it seems clear from Athens that Papadopoulos has every intention of continuing to make life miserable for Turkey -- whether it is pressing for Cypriot membership in international organizations or insisting on early Turkish parliamentary ratification of the customs union protocol. Athens does not want to see the

recognition debate reignited or take the risk of being carried along as an unwilling partner in prolonged Cypriot interference in the EU accession process. Inevitably, Nicosia's actions in this regard would spill over into Greek-Turkish relations and Karamanlis might no longer be able to keep his two tracks quite so separate.

Some Vision Please?

15. (C) From our vantage point, the central problem is that neither the Greek Cypriot nor the Turkish Cypriot side seems anxious to engage. President Papadopoulos must feel content with the leverage his seat at the EU table gives him and happy to have changed the subject from why the Cypriots did not support the Annan Plan to why Turkey won't recognize Cyprus. "TRNC" President Talat prefers to focus on ways to reduce the North's "isolation" as the overdue reward for supporting the Annan Plan. To escape this trap, and to get to a situation where outside interested parties such as ourselves, the Greeks and the British can make a difference, we agree with Nicosia that we must find a way to foster an environment where the two communities can build trust and practice communication.

16. (C) In other words, we need to start focusing on a vision of Greek and Turkish Cypriots living together in a common state. Perhaps a way to break the logjam and make the issue larger than just the sum of its details is to suggest that UNSYG Annan appoint a "group of wisemen" who want to see such a vision become reality. Such a group might be chaired by highly respected, internationally known figures with impeccable moral credentials but not currently in government (President Havel?) and have prominent Greeks (former PMs Simitis and Mitsotakis, for example) and an equal number of respected Turkish and Greek/Turkish Cypriot leaders (former President Clerides?) who could inspire goodwill and create an atmosphere far more conducive to a settlement than the current situation. The wisemen could meet with the interested parties and perhaps at some point hold a high-level meeting in a neutral place (perhaps Australia, with its large contribution to UNFICYP) to signal their resolve on finding a solution. Blessed by the UNSYG, this high-powered group might be able to reach the Greek Cypriot people over the heads of the defensive Papadopoulos and his insincere repetition of a solution based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation.

17. (C) We would want to make sure these wisemen have a positive, visionary influence. They could have terms of reference that preclude their getting bogged down in property claims in the North or other contentious details. The role would be to set the tone and change the atmosphere, not figure out all the fine points of negotiation.

Other Efforts

18. (C) In addition to the idea of the wisemen, we suggest the following actions:

-- With Greece: In the short-term, we need Greece to reiterate publicly its commitment to a Cyprus settlement, that the time is right, and that the locus of activity remains the UN (not the EU). This could be done in a variety of ways -- FM interview, as part of the MFA's weekly press briefings, statement at the UN, etc.

-- Also with Greece: In the medium term, look for issues that are important to Papadopoulos and on which he relies for Greek support. Perhaps there can be some pressure brought to bear here.

-- At the UNSC: There should be a debate by year's end on Cyprus next steps to highlight the primacy of the UN in the settlement process. The British could take this lead, as both a permanent UNSC member and EU President; Greece could help here as well, as it is a member until the end of 2006. We would want to have close P-5 consultations to make sure Russia/China do not use their veto to block, but also because it makes sense to have these two influential, non-EU countries behind this effort.

-- Within the EU: Identify 2-3 key members who agree with our view that the EU is not the right place for pursuing a comprehensive settlement and who see Papadopoulos as the problem. What can they do to help rein him in?

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